

NOV 16 2007

Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary

00-168

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I appreciate this opportunity to respond to how well broadcasters in my local are serving my needs. I will seek to address a number of the questions that you presented in your inquiry. I feel that the broadcasting industry as a whole doesn't serve my needs very well and as such I don't listen to many radio broadcasts or watch much in the way of television (and I don't subscribe to cable/satellite etc.).

The following are answers to some of the questions that you have posed in your inquiry, also included are general comments that may not have been specifically requested but that I felt would be appropriate for this correspondence. If the comment is in direct answer to a question that you posed, I will attempt to document the specific paragraph in the inquiry that it is in regards to, otherwise it may be a comment in general.

- (Paragraph 3) In response to your question regarding petitioning to deny a license to a licensee: I personally had no idea until I read your Notice of Inquiry that citizens had the right to petition that a licensee's renewal request be denied. As such, I also have no idea how to petition the FCC to deny a license to a licensee. Also, it seems that with an 8-year licensing period, that the opportunity to deny a license at renewal time is very limited. Also, how do we know when a broadcaster is up for license renewal? How is that information put to the general public for comments?
- (Paragraphs 3 and 4) Perhaps when it comes to renewal time, licensees should prove they are serving the public, not just prove they aren't breaking rules. Put the burden of proof on those who would like to use our airwaves. Let them prove that in addition to not offending us, that they are actually serving us in some manner.
- (Paragraph 11) In answer to your questions in regards to what broadcasters can do to determine what kind of programming meets local needs, they could simply ask. I have never been asked, and I don't know anyone who had been asked and have never seen any kind of generic request from broadcasters in our area regarding the content that we would like to see or hear. Perhaps it would be good for the public's opinions to be solicited in regards to what issues they would like to see. Broadcasters know that they need to provide a certain number of service broadcast hours. Ask their audience what the audience feels they need and would like to see, THEN DELIVER IT. The broadcasting industry has been doing market research for quite a while, it shouldn't be too hard to accurately determine what the public wants.
- (Paragraph 14) Are my personal needs/desires being served? In reading your Notice of Inquiry, the realization came to me that I have never really considered if my personal desires are being served by the media outlets that are broadcasting in my area. I understand that programming that would fit the educational needs and wants that I have, would not necessarily be programs that would generate enough revenue to be profitable to networks. It occurred to me that I see very little programming that is of educational interest to me. My interests include personal finance, computers and self-improvement. I believe that most of the educational

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shows broadcast are about nature, and while any educational programming is a good thing, I wonder if the community needs might be better served by shows that help to educate people on topics more relevant to their immediate lives. I would find it exciting to see a network broadcasting programming that helps low income or low skill families learn about computers, or personal finance or about other skills that they will need to become more successful in today's society. They may not be able to afford this training formally at a college (even a community college) or trade school. Programming with basic instruction in these subjects could fill a great need in the community.

- (Paragraph 14) Quite honestly, as far as local content is concerned, most of it is not very helpful. Local newscasts are severely lacking in the content that really makes a difference to me as a citizen and a person. For example, every monsoon season here in Arizona, 1/2 the newscast ends up being devoted to the 'storm that's rolling in'. It seems, often, that there is little real content about the things that effect me as a person. The content has been sacrificed to other more menial causes. In addition it seems that sometimes the local newscast is more about generating advertising revenue than delivering news. They often have personalities "reporting from" commercial locations around the city that have no relevance to the news they cover (but the commercial locations get a good bit of promotional airtime). Just having local content doesn't mean that the content is of any quality, or that it is helpful to any of the local citizens. It seems sometimes that the local content is a trivial token offering to satisfy the requirements. For example, local animal shelters put on a show called 'Pets on Parade' on Saturday mornings in our area. I certainly feel that while this may be considered local content, it is of little use to me personally. This space could be better used to inform citizens of the goings-on of their federal, state and local governments.
- (Paragraph 14) Government and citizens have both repeatedly called on broadcast networks and media outlets to stop depicting activities that are hazardous to our children as desirable and 'cool' (drinking, smoking, drug use, being sexually active). Generally speaking, there are very few parents, if any, who would like their kids to start smoking, or to begin using drugs, yet we see this behavior lauded continually in our media. To behave in this manner is well outside the bounds of operating within the public interest. Broadcasters should be held accountable for their operating outside the realm of public interest. Instead of the public in general guiding broadcasters, I see broadcasters having a social and political agenda that THEY believe is in our best interest (or that may just be in THEIR best interest) that they push on us continually. Instead of providing us what we want, they provide us with what they want and try to convince us that it is quality programming. Television is filled with examples of programming that flies in the face of the public opinion. A general perusal through evening programming will highlight any number of shows full of sexual innuendo and misconduct, drug use, profanity and violence that isn't in line with what the mainstream of our community wants. It is almost proverbial how far off community standards programming is.

during. I have often seen teens in television shows smoking, taking drugs, being violent and being sexually active with no consequences. These shows are much longer in duration than the PSA's, and portray the very activities that the PSA's are working to fight as much more glamorous to participate in than the PSA makes not participating in them seem. It seems to me that both sides of the issue are presented, but there is a vast difference between the quality and effectiveness of the presentations of the two extremes. If we believe that the PSA's have any merit at all, then we must recognize that the shows we present are 30 minute PSA's either for good standards or for bad.

- (Paragraph 19) In regards to political programming, it is my belief that programming regarding our political process is very limited. The extent to which we as citizens learn what is happening in our legislatures (both local and federal) is through news casts. Much of this coverage is limited at best. As a tax-paying citizen, I would like a good means of knowing what the various legislatures are spending my hard earned money on and why. Much of what they do goes unreported as a result of its non-controversial nature. I would love to see a segment that lets me know: 'Here's what your representatives in government did today...' People might be more active in their government if they knew what was actually going on.
- (Paragraph 35) In answer to your questions regarding payola and other such behavior. It truly seems that the only reason any music is played on the radio is because the recording industry dictates that it be played. This Notice of Inquiry was quite enlightening to me regarding standard operating practices in the music industry. There is no doubt in my mind that the new songs that are played over and over on the radio are a result of careful planning on someone's part. Let me give you two examples of why I believe this. First example: I remember when I used to listen to the radio on a frequent basis usually in one of my technical classes in school, we could almost set our watches by when they would play a certain song. If the song came on, we knew it was 10:30 am. Second Example: I have a specific genre of music that appeals to me. I know that there are 2-3 stations that will play music that generally falls into this genre. On numerous occasions, I have heard a song I don't particularly like and changed the station only to hear it playing on 1 or even 2 other stations. I don't believe that is merely coincidence that it is being simultaneously broadcast on three separate stations. I finally came to the conclusion a few years ago, that radio stations aren't there to play music, they are there to play commercials. They play the music to lure us into listening to the commercials. EVERYTHING they do is a marketing ploy. All the places they go, all the things they do, all the promotions and contests that they do, is to get people to listen to the commercials.
- (Paragraphs 36 and 37) Just a quick comment in regards to sponsorship identification. I believe that strict and rigorous enforcement in requiring sponsors to identify their contributions should be required. This is important because it helps us as viewers to consider the source of the information. Showing sponsor

ship quickly in small type at the end of a show mixed in the credits doesn't seem to me to be adequate identification. We as the public have a right to know who is renting OUR airwaves from the people that are licensed to use it.

- (Paragraph 37) In response to some of your questions presented in I have a few more questions: Do shows such as David Letterman and Jay Leno who seem to exist mostly to promote the newest movies need to state sponsorship from the movies (I assume that they receive some sort of compensation for plugging the new movie. The guests aren't usually on the program long enough to have any meaningful dialog about much else other than the movie)? Do shows that exist to promote new movies necessarily meet my and other community needs? If these shows do currently receive compensation, when do they announce the sponsorship (I have yet to see it)? Should the show be required to state the sponsorship as it occurs or at the end of the show? My thought would be that it would be more appropriate to announce it during the segment that is being sponsored. Otherwise, we as a public will not necessarily connect the segment with the sponsorship. The identification of sponsorship is so that WE as a public can be informed about what we are watching and as such, networks should be informing us, not attempting to hide it from us and deceive us.
- (Paragraph 41) In answer to your questions regarding the length of licensing terms: It is my opinion that the FCC should have shorter licensing terms and more frequent reviews. Eight years is a significant amount of time. That is enough time for a network to unduly influence two presidential elections. Eight years is long enough for a new generation of children to be influenced in a major way. Eight years is enough for RADICAL change to happen in society. The community standards (for better or worse) that governed the licensee when the period started can (and probably will be) radically different than at the end of the term. Reviews that are spanned too far apart cannot adequately monitor the current status of any broadcasting entity.
- (Statement of Commissioner Copps) As a citizen who is active in trying to clean up our airwaves and a parent who would like to see decency enforced, I have to agree with Commissioner Michael Copps and ask, where is the action? It seems that there have been a lot of people sending a lot of information to the FCC, and that there are things that the FCC could be doing right now. There is certainly no shortage of offensive material being broadcast as we speak. It is my belief that the FCC should be taking an active stance to search out and fine programs that are offensive and that are a blatant misuse of our airwaves. Stop looking for ways to stall and start doing something, NOW.

General Comments that are not necessarily in response to a specific question:

- From the point of view of someone who desires greatly to have clean programming on our broadcast mediums, it seems that networks consistently ignore our complaints regarding falling standards. Some of the media

personalities that are broadcast on these networks openly mock us for our views and requests claiming 'censorship' and 'that their first amendment rights are being infringed upon' (Howard Stern, for example completely disregards community standards and then rails loud and hard against those of us who would rather see clean and decent programming).

- Often time sponsors are unaware of the content that they are supporting with their advertising dollars. Perhaps the companies who support programming with their considerable advertising dollars should be held responsible for the programming that they supported. For instance, if a program was fined for indecency, then perhaps a fine should also apply to companies who sponsor the indecent programming. This may help to encourage the real market forces (companies with advertising money) take into account the material that they will be supporting and whether it is supporting the communities that it should be serving. Perhaps there could be a means of requiring networks to provide accurate information to sponsors regarding the content of the programs that they are supporting with their advertising money.
- The media in general seems to have a tremendous bias toward the liberal spectrum. I believe that this problem extends well past the broadcast spectrum (and into print as well), but there is plenty of liberal bias within the broadcast spectrum. It worries me to listen to newscasts where I can hear the subtle (and blatant) bias. How is the general public supposed to form adequate opinions on issues and current events if we aren't provided with all the facts. Stories are told one sided, other times it is stories that bash conservatives that are broadcast while similar stories regarding liberals are ignored. I have noticed a trend (more in print and radio than television), where news stories may be reported fairly objectively, but then followed up immediately with an editorial that blasts the conservative position. Objectivity followed closely with a liberal editorial. Give both sides even time to explain their views and truly present with objectivity. This bias doesn't stop at newscasts though, if anything it is much more prolific in entertainment. Television entertainment shows mock and scorn any traditional values that society may have. Research shows that many people still relish traditional values, but broadcast media seems to be on a mission to counter and remove those values. The incidents of sexual content, drug usage, violence and obscenities that are broadcast not just on television, but radio are so prolific that it is almost proverbial how far they go and how much they show. Obviously, if the majority of people relish traditional values, and the majority of entertainment mocks these values, then the community's standards and needs are not being met.
- One thought that I had that you hadn't addressed specifically is the possibility of penalties for broadcasters who deliberately (or accidentally) broadcast false and misleading information (such as improperly done research, slander and or allowing a bias to taint a news story). Misinforming the public is definitely not in the best interest of the community. I realize that this may be a hard thing to enforce, but it seems that if citizens can provide data that suggests a broadcast

story was misleading or just plain false, that there should be penalties to the broadcaster for not having done their homework and research before broadcasting something as fact.

- It is my feeling that the FCC needs a much better way of requesting frequent input from the public. If I hadn't been part of a group that monitors a lot of what happens with the FCC, I might never have known that the FCC was putting together an inquiry requesting my input. This also applies to other communications. Perhaps it would be a good idea to have the FCC do Public Service Announcements that give an 800 number to contact so that people are aware that you want to hear from them and how to get in touch with you.
- It seems to me that the FCC should be a more proactive body rather than one that is entirely reactive. There are many infractions on a daily basis. The FCC need only monitor the airwaves and start looking for this content. Standards do change, but it isn't that hard to base judgments on past complaints. I'm sure that the FCC has a solid enough basis in previous complaints that they do not need to wait for citizens to complain to know that something should warrant penalties.
- Make it easier for the public to communicate with the FCC, especially when it comes to making complaints. I have looked at what I have to do to get this inquiry to you. If I were any lazier than I am, I wouldn't do it. The process for delivering any correspondence to you is staggering and I would guess that it eliminates much of the correspondence that you are actually looking for. Have an online form. Make it easy to find on your site. Reduce the amount of headache that people have to go through to communicate with you. Quite honestly, the sheer magnitude of what I am going to have to do to send this inquiry to you makes it very unappealing. Your commission should be encouraging any and all correspondence with the public. You are guarding our airwaves. Make it easy to let us talk to you. As a suggestion to make it easier to lodge a complaint, put the burden of proof on the broadcasters. Have them provide the recording and or the transcript (perhaps transcripts can be provided by the show producers). To make it easier, have a program ID number that the public can reference instead of having to put all the details together. Maybe I'm mistaken, but it seems that VCR+ has been doing this for a long time (Enter a number, and your VCR will know when and what to record for you). Perhaps the FCC could do something similar.
- Perhaps it would be a good idea to require programs to have a better ratings system. I know that they do now have a ratings system, but most people are unaware of what exactly the ratings mean, and they have no means of blocking content that doesn't meet their standards. Some content doesn't belong on our airwaves period, but for the rest of it, perhaps a revamp of the current rating system would help. Maybe declare at the beginning of the program that there are x obscenities, x sexual situations and x incidences of violence so that parents can be informed better about what their kids are planning to watch. It seems that the current rating structure is lacking.

I would like to thank you again for the opportunity to make my opinions know. My hope is that you take the information presented and begin implementing strategies immediately. I know that I am not alone in my opinion of many of these issues, and know that some of my opinions regarding our programming represents quite a number of people that I know.

Thank you for your time

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